

Food Availability

One key goal of manufacturers, restaurants and marketers is to ensure that their products are never far from children's reach. With over 420,000 restaurants and other food service outlets in the country, there are opportunities to eat out almost everywhere children go – shopping malls, gas stations, movie theaters, highway rest stops, sporting events, etc. (US Census Bureau, 1997). That includes approximately 174,000 kid-oriented fast-food outlets. There are vending machines in approximately 1.4 million schools, worksites, colleges, hospitals, public buildings and other locations (Lavay, 2002).

Food Marketing in Schools

Marketing in schools has become big business. Businesses see it as an opportunity to make direct sales and to cultivate brand loyalty. They realize that schools are a great place to reach children, since almost all attend school and they spend a large proportion of their waking hours there. School-based marketing also adds credibility to marketing activities by associating the company's name and product with trusted schools or teachers.

Nineteen states have laws or regulations that address commercial activities in schools, but just five of those are comprehensive in nature (GAO, 2000). Only 12% of schools

prohibit the sale of junk foods³ out of vending machines, school stores, snack bars and other venues outside of the school cafeteria (CDC, 2000b). Some have defended the sales of low-nutrition foods at schools by saying that if schools do not sell these foods, children will just buy them off campus. However, 75% of senior high schools, 90% of middle/junior high schools and 95% of elementary schools have closed-campus policies (CDC, 2002b).

National PTA guidelines state that "public schools must not be used to promote commercial interest" (National PTA, 2002). The National Association of State Boards of Education's (NASBE) policy on school-business relationships states that "selling or providing access to a captive audience in the classroom for commercial purposes is exploitation and a violation of the public trust" (NASBE, 1998).

Many companies are taking advantage of schools' financial difficulties by offering marketing dollars as a way for schools to bridge budget gaps.

Commercial activities in schools include: 1) product sales, such as food sales out of vending machines, exclusive soft drink contracts, fundraising activities or receipt rebate programs; 2) direct advertising, such as ads on vending machines, scoreboards, posters, school publications, book covers, banners in gymnasiums and Channel One; 3) free

³CDC defines junk foods as foods that provide calories primarily through fats or added sugars and have minimal amounts of vitamins and minerals.

product samples; 4) indirect advertising, such as corporate-sponsored educational materials and teacher training, contests in which children receive product prizes, incentive programs and corporate gifts in which the donor benefits commercially; and 5) market research, such as student surveys or panels and tracking of students' Internet activities (GAO, 2000).⁴

Product Sales in Schools. The General Accounting Office (GAO) found that "product sales – primarily the sale of soft drinks by schools or districts under exclusive contracts and short-term fundraising sales – were the most common and lucrative type of commercial activity at the schools visited" (GAO, 2000). Vending machines, school stores, canteens or snack bars are in almost half of

Schools with Vending Machines, Stores, Snack Bars*

<u>School Level</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Elementary	43%
Middle/Junior High	74%
High School	98%

*CDC, 2000b

elementary schools, three-quarters of middle schools and virtually all high schools (see table) (CDC, 2000b). The most common items sold are soft drinks, fruit drinks that are not 100% juice, and salty snack foods and sweet baked goods that are not low fat. Vending machines not only dispense high-calorie, low-nutrition foods, but the fronts and sides of the machines often are ads in and of themselves.



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Of all product sales in schools, exclusive soft-drink contracts are the fastest-growing ventures (GAO, 2000). Half of school districts have contracts with soft drink companies (CDC, 2000b). However, the conditions and profitability of exclusive soft drink contracts vary considerably from district to district (GAO, 2000). Though some contracts appear to be lucrative, the funds raised usually represent only a small fraction of a district's overall budget. On average, contracts generate from \$3 to \$30 per student per year, and even the most lucrative contract provides less than 0.5% of a school district's budget (GAO, 2000).

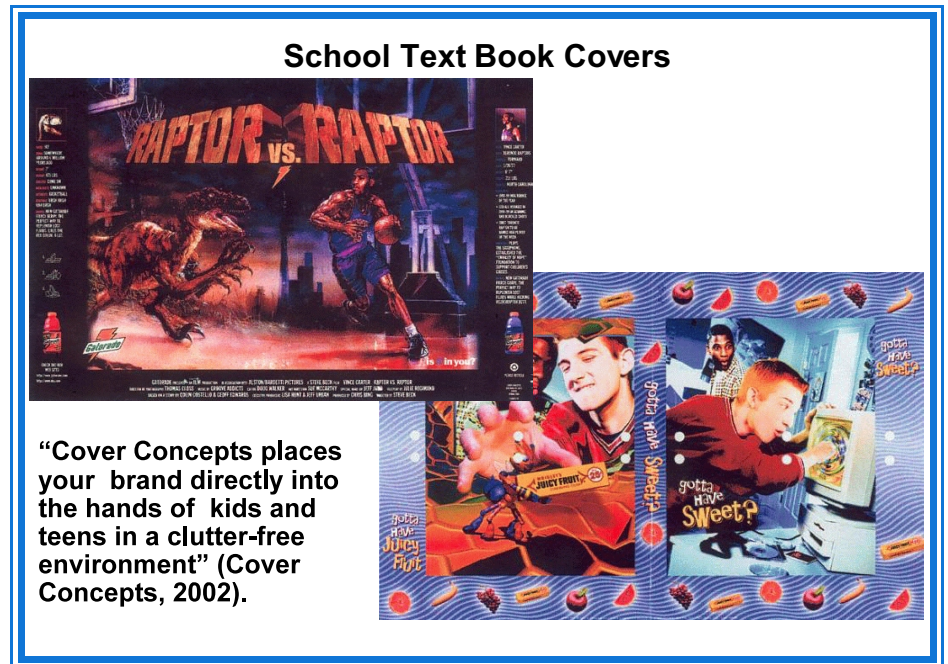
⁴ A list of companies that advertise in schools is available from Consumers Union at <http://www.consumersunion.org/other/sellingkids/advertiserlist.htm>.

Exclusive soft drink contracts usually include provisions under which the district or school earns more revenue the more soft drinks they sell. About 80% of districts receive a percentage of sales and 63% receive incentives tied to sales (CDC, 2000b). Such arrangements create a situation in which it is in the financial interest of the school administration for students to drink more soda and can lead schools to promote soft drinks to children and make them more available (in more locations or for longer periods of time during the school day).

The percentage of public schools, participating in the National School Lunch Program, that offer **brand-name fast food** rose six-fold (from 2% to 13%) between the 1990 and 1995 school years (GAO, 1996). By 2000, brand-name fast food was offered in 20% of schools (CDC, 2000c).

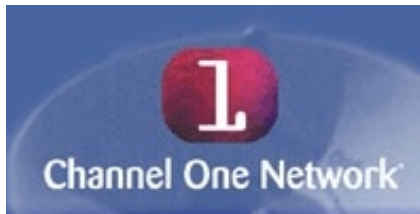
Fundraising by student groups, parent-teacher organizations, booster clubs and athletic programs often involves the sale of low-nutrition foods. About 80% of schools sell foods or beverages for fundraising (CDC, 2002b). Of those schools, 76% sell chocolate candy, 67% sell baked goods that are not low fat, and 63% sell non-chocolate candy.

Direct Advertising in Schools.
The GAO (2000) found that the most visible and prevalent advertisements in



schools are soft drink ads (including on beverage vending machines) and corporate logos on scoreboards. Other advertising in schools is on book covers, posters, school buses, school calendars, school newspapers and printed programs for school events. A survey of California high schools found that 39% of districts had fast food and beverage ads on posters, 28% had ads on scoreboards or signs, and only 13% prohibited advertising (15% of districts did not respond) (Craypo et al., 2002).

Channel One is a for-profit enterprise that provides electronic equipment (a satellite dish, wiring, VCRs and televisions in each classroom) to schools in exchange for schools showing students (in at least 80% of classrooms on 90% of school days) a 12-minute news program, including 2 minutes of commercials (GAO, 2000). Channel One promotional materials boast that it has “television’s largest teen audience” (Channel One News,



2002), with more than 8 million viewers in over 12,000 middle, junior and high schools (Channel One, 2003). However, public pressure has kept Channel One out of New York public schools.

Channel One promotes unhealthy eating habits to children by airing ads for low-nutrition foods, including Pepsi, Snapple, MUG root beer, Gatorade, Snickers candy bars and Starburst candy. Channel One adds credibility to advertising because it is shown in school, and adds to children's television viewing time, which already exceeds recommended levels. In addition, Channel One cuts into instruction time. Class time lost to Channel One has been estimated to cost taxpayers \$1.8 billion a year (Reid & Gedissman, 2000), with 6 hours of class time devoted to advertising each school year.⁵

Channel One positions itself with educators as a way to "empower young people by keeping them informed of current events" (Channel One, 2002). However, the company's sales tape paints a different picture (Channel One, 1996). The tape states that "Millions of teenagers are all over the place but there's one place where you can get to them." Then, the tape cuts to children

watching Channel One in school. Several people on the tape, including teachers, explain how much the kids pay attention to the commercials.

School Contests, Coupons and Incentives. Another way that food companies market their products to children is by sponsoring contests and giving away coupons in schools.

\$2,500 Products **\$59 Stapler**

With Campbell's Labels for Education program, students' families have to buy about \$2,500 worth of soup to obtain enough labels to get a \$59 heavy-duty stapler for their school.

✗ Kraft sponsored a contest in which elementary-school "kids from across the country sing the praises of hot dogs and bologna" for the chance to win \$10,000 for their school's music program (Kraft Foods, 2002).⁶

✗ With Campbell's Labels for Education program, students collect labels from Campbell products and redeem them for school supplies, musical instruments or food service equipment (Campbell Soup Company, 2003). However, the program requires students' families to

⁵Based on a 180-day school year.

⁶In July 2003, Kraft Foods announced that it will no longer market its products in schools. However, school-based marketing was not a major marketing venue for Kraft.

buy almost \$15,000 worth of soup to earn one stock pot for the school kitchen (12,400 required labels from cans of soup that cost about \$1.20 each) or \$2,500 worth of soup to get a heavy duty stapler (2,100 labels).

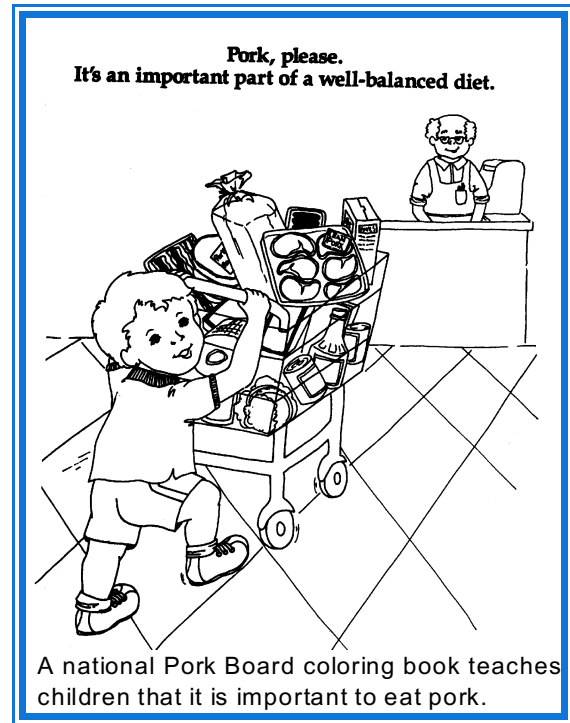
✕ The Pepsi Notes contest provided musical instruments to schools in exchange for note symbols collected from Pepsi and Frito-Lay packages (PepsiCo, 2002).

✕ Pizza Hut has a school-based program that rewards elementary school students for reading a required number of books by giving them a coupon for a free Personal Pan Pizza (Pizza Hut, 2003). Not only does this program use a low-nutrition food to reward academic achievement, but it often results in other family members eating – and paying for their own meals – at the restaurant (which, of course, is a goal of the promotion).

✕ The Krispy Kreme Good Grades program offers elementary school children one doughnut for each “A” they earn on their report card (and up to six doughnuts per grading period) (Krispy Kreme, 2003).

Only Alabama and the District of Columbia prohibit the use of food to reward children for good behavior or academic performance, and seven other states (Alaska, Arkansas, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon, Wisconsin and Wyoming) discourage this practice (CDC, 2001a).

Corporate-Sponsored Educational Materials. Consumers Union found that 80% of the 77 industry-



sponsored educational materials they reviewed promoted the company's agenda or consumption of their product(s) or included biased or incomplete information (Consumers Union, 1998a).

Several food companies provide educational materials for children. The content of McDonald's *What's On Your Plate* video (McDonald's, 2002b) and the National Dairy Council's *Pyramid Cafe Student Workbook* are not overly commercial or misleading (National Dairy Council, 1998). However, the Dairy Council's workbook emphasizes milk over the other food groups by consistently listing the milk food group first and by showcasing only dairy foods, including the "Got Milk" ad slogan, on the back page of the workbook. The National Pork Board's *Learning about Pork* coloring book teaches children that pork is "an important part of a well-

balanced diet” and that “healthy pigs are happy” (National Pork Board, 1996). Other materials do not seek to teach nutrition directly, but aim to cultivate brand identity and loyalty. Coca-Cola and McDonald’s co-sponsor the *Little Known Black History Facts Education Kit*, and McDonald’s has materials on subjects ranging from fire safety to suicide prevention (McDonald’s, 2002b). For grades K-5, teachers can call their local McDonald’s restaurant and arrange for “inspirational lessons...hosted by Ronald McDonald.”

Schools in California are prohibited by law from using materials containing corporate logos, commercial brand names and products unless the use of the logo, brand name or product is necessary for educational purposes (California Education Code, 2003).

representing a hamburger, fries and a drink, and the Let’s Go to McDonald’s Game (McDonald’s, 2002a). Kellogg sells dolls of its cereal icons (Tony the Tiger, Toucan Sam, etc.), as well as toys, clothing, cereal bowls, spoons and snack containers (Kellogg, 2002).



Food ads also come in the form of toys, clothes, games and books.

Toys, Books, Clothing and Other Products with Brand Logos

Many manufacturers sell toys, books and apparel that are advertisements for their products. Dr. Marion Nestle, chair of Nutrition and Food Studies at New York University, calls these “ads you buy” (Nestle, 2002). The Coca-Cola website sells T-shirts, toys, games, sports gear and other child-oriented products with the Coca-Cola standard logo and/or polar bear mascot (Coca-Cola, 2002). The McDonald’s Kids’ Stuff website sells tee-shirts (including in sizes for 2 to 4 year olds), a “Happy Meal Guys” lunch box, soft dolls

McDonald’s Fun Time! Restaurant Playset comes with a food counter and miniature fries, burgers, pies and sodas, all emblazoned with the golden arches. Barbie, dressed as a McDonald’s clerk, and Kelly, shown eating a Happy Meal, are sold separately. Heinz’s Sizzlin’ BBQ Play Set comes with a play grill, food and Heinz-branded ketchup, relish, pickles and BBQ sauce. M&M’s Minis serve as the fuselage for Hasbro’s Aircraft Candy Copter (toy helicopter).

There are reading and counting books for toddlers and young children centered around brand-name foods. Books include *Kellogg’s Froot Loops! Counting*

Fun Book and the *M&M's Brand Birthday Book*.

Reading the *Oreo Cookie Counting Book* involves eating 10 Oreos, which would provide 535 calories.

The M&M's and Froot Loops books include cut-out circles in which to place the food. There also are children's books based on Skittles, Hershey Kisses, Necco Sweetheart candies, Cheerios, Sun-Maid raisins and Pepperidge Farm Goldfish. For slightly older children, there are *Reese's Pieces: Count by Fives*, *Skittles Riddles Math* and the *Hershey's Milk Chocolate Bar Fractions Book*.



"It's not that these (snack-brand) books resemble advertising - they are advertising," stated Kate Klimo, publisher of Random House's Children's Books Division (Kirkpatrick, 2000).

Snack-brand children's books reinforce brand identities and bring additional marketing into children's lives. Although many children are already consuming too many calories, these books create additional opportunities for children to eat (often low-nutrition foods) by making eating a part of reading.

Websites

Many food companies market their products to children on the Internet and direct children to their websites through ads and product packaging. Through on-line games and activities, the websites can provide repeated brand exposure and positive interaction with a brand to help cultivate brand identity and loyalty.

There is little separation between advertising and content on food company websites geared toward children. Food products, logos and company spokescharacters are built into the games and other website content. Unlike television commercials, which can be ignored by muting the television or flipping channels, children are completely absorbed while playing an "advergame." Advergames on food company websites may be short compared to computer or console games, but they are long for advertisements (Edwards, 2003).

Nabiscoworld.com features more than 50 games, puzzles, screen savers and sweepstakes, each sponsored by a brand of Nabisco's cookies and snacks.⁷ Some of the games are aimed at toddlers such as *Where's Teddy?*, a game where toddlers find hidden Teddy Graham cookies (Nabisco, 2003a). In the *Oreo Adventure* game, when children find the golden cookie jars on their journey to the Temple of the Golden Oreo, their "health" is reset to 100% (Nabisco, 2003b). If children click

⁷ Based on a count of site map links at <<http://www.nabiscoworld.com>> on May 25, 2003.



on the *Watch the Videos* link on the Chips Ahoy section of the Nabisco website, they will see not movie clips, but rather television commercials for chips Ahoy! cookies (Nabisco, 2003c). Kraft Food's Candystand.com includes numerous advergames and sweepstakes promoting Life Savers candy and receives more than 1 million unique visitors a month (Edwards, 2003). The Hershey Foods' site has games, puzzles, recipes and a quiz to test children's knowledge of Hershey's ads and products (Hershey Foods, 2003). The Kellogg site includes a "nutrition camp" hosted by sugary cereal icons such as Tony the Tiger, Toucan Sam and Dig'em, the Smacks frog (Kellogg Company, 2003). The site teaches children that calories are "the action heroes of the food world" and that "Kellogg's cereals are loaded with carbohydrates – your body's preferred source of energy." The McDonald's kids' website has an alphabet game, coloring activities, quizzes and riddles (McDonald's Corporation, 2002c).

Stealth Advertising: Product Placement

Food companies also market products to children through product placement (paying a fee or donating products to be incorporated into movies and television programs). In the 2002 blockbuster *Spider-Man*, the hero used his newly-discovered web-spinning power to retrieve a Dr. Pepper. A Dr. Pepper spokesman said, "We felt it would attract audiences of all ages, and especially teens and young adults" (Elliott, 2002). A futuristic-looking Big Mac, fries and soda, featuring the McDonald's arches, pops out of the Cortez children's lunch box in *Spy Kid's 2*, and Heinz ketchup appears in Warner Bros.' *Scooby Doo* movie. Canada Dry vending machines appeared on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (though in reality, Canada Dry vending machines do not exist) (Vista Group, 2002b).

Children are unlikely to recognize product placement as advertising because it is an integral part of a movie or program and thus, children may be less skeptical of, and perhaps more susceptible to, it than to more obvious forms of advertising. Placement agencies claim that product placements may have more credibility than paid advertising and can provide implied endorsements when an actor uses a product (Vista Group, 2002a).

In a study of adults, Gupta and Lord (1998) found that prominent product placements were remembered better than advertisements of similar length, though advertisements were more

memorable than subtle product placements.

Other studies also have found that product placements are remembered, and one found that placements increase reported intention to purchase featured brands (Karrh, 1998).

Product placements create and reinforce social norms regarding the product. They also undermine parental responsibility and control because they cannot be skipped over and avoided. However, some argue that brand placements are a necessary component of programs and movies to make them realistic, because brands are a part of everyday life.

“Placements are shown in the context of the show. They cannot be skipped over like print ads, ‘zapped’ by VCR users, or ignored by viewers,” Vista Group, a product placement agency (2002a).

The surge in sales of Reese’s Pieces (which was not a paid product placement) after the original release of *E.T.* sparked a significant increase in product placements (Beck, 2001). *Kidscreen*, an online marketing magazine, wrote, “Product placement in movies, particularly in kids’ and teen films, is now at an all-time high and has become a mini-industry unto itself” (Beck, 2001).

The cost of product placements in movies varies depending on how long and how prominently the product is

displayed, and whether a character in the movie interacts with it (Avery & Ferraro, 2000). However, in many cases, especially for television, the client provides the legal rights to use a product and/or extra product to the studio, rather than a monetary fee.

Television stations are required by the Federal Communications Commission to disclose product placements for which money or services are either directly or indirectly received or promised, notifying the audience that the product was sponsored, paid for or provided and by whom (FCC, 2002). However, such disclosures would be in small print at the end of a television show and are unlikely to be seen, especially by children. In addition, the policy does not require that a payment made to an agency for a product placement be made public.

A study of prime time programs (which were not all aimed at children) on the four major broadcast television stations (ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC) found about 10 brand appearances per half hour program for situational comedies and 58 brand appearances per half hour of sports programming (Avery & Ferraro, 2000).

Kid’s Clubs

Unlike real clubs where children come together around common interests to have fun and make friends, kid’s clubs or birthday clubs hosted by food companies act largely as vehicles for advertising to children and sending them magazines (often with ads), coupons or catalogs (Consumers Union, 1990). Burger King and Blimpie Subs

and Salads have kid's clubs, and California Pizza Kitchen, Baskin Robbins and Denny's restaurants sponsor birthday clubs. The Blimpie Important Person (BIP) Club e-mails children regarding "coupon distribution, when (their) commercials will be airing on television, and all other Blimpie information" (Blimpie, 2003).

By joining the Baskin Robbins' Birthday Club, a child 12 or under is given a coupon for a free kids-sized ice cream cone on his birthday (as well as other offers from Baskin Robbins, Dunkin' Donuts and Togo's throughout the year). Denny's restaurant offers a free kid's entree and sundae for children's birthdays, but kids can only get their "free" meal with the purchase of a regularly priced adult entree (Denny's, 2003).

Packaging and Placement in Supermarkets and Other Retail Stores

Even if parents manage to limit their children's exposure to television advertising, there is a great deal of in-store food marketing aimed at children. Food manufacturers pay grocery stores "slotting" and "pay-to-stay" fees in order to get and keep good shelf space (Dimitri, 2001; Federal Trade Commission, 2001). That is one reason for the large amount of space devoted to cereals, chips and candy in grocery stores and why children's products are placed so that kids can see and reach them without assistance from a parent.

Food Packaging. The design of food packaging is carefully studied by food companies and research firms.

Grocery stores are "designed for kids. That's why you always see a kid tugging at someone's arm saying 'Buy this,'" said Greg Kahn, founder of Kahn Research Group (ElBoghdady, 2003).

Companies design their packages to stand out and appeal to children, carefully choosing the color, the product name, ease of use of the packaging, portion size and use of cartoon or other characters (Food Processing, 1997). Red has been shown to be a powerful color, signaling sweetness and/or excitement, and is used for the packaging of products such as Coca-Cola and Kellogg's Froot Loops (Lindner, 1999).



Belly Washers uses fun packaging and cartoon characters to sell sugar water.

The fun and attention-getting colors of Heinz' Blastin' Green and Funky Purple ketchup are, in part, responsible for the growth of Heinz market share since 2000 (McGinn, 2003). The company also credits easier-to-squeeze packaging as important to the products'

success (Eig, 2001). Easier-to-use packaging appeals to children who often prefer to serve themselves and want greater independence and control during meals.

Many companies feature cartoon or other movie or television characters on their product packages to increase sales to children (see table). Food companies also design their own “spokes-characters” to sell products to children.

Mars uses the M&M’s characters, which the company claims are more popular than Bart Simpson or Mickey Mouse (Mars, 2002). Kellogg has Tony the Tiger, Snap, Crackle and Pop, Toucan Sam and Dig’em the frog to sell its cereal. General Mills uses the Pillsbury Doughboy and the Trix rabbit. Frito-Lay created Chester Cheetah to help sell Cheetos cheese snacks. And of course, McDonald’s has the clown, Ronald McDonald.

Cartoon or Other Characters on Food Packages

<u>Company</u>	<u>Product</u>	<u>Characters</u>
Nabisco	Dora the Explorer Teddy Grahams cookies	Dora the Explorer
Edy’s	Fish ‘n Chips ice cream	Characters from Disney’s <i>Finding Nemo</i>
General Mills	fruit snacks	Elmo, Snow White, Little Mermaid, Cinderella
ConAgra Foods	Kid Cuisine frozen dinners	Powerpuff Girls, Fairly Odd Parents, Wild Thornberrys, Rugrats
Nabisco	Ritz crackers, Oreo cookies	Hulk
Ore Ida	Funky Fries	Jimmy Neutron
Kraft	Macaroni & Cheese	SpongeBob Squarepants
Kellogg	Spidey-Berry flavored Pop-Tarts and Spider-Man cereal	Spider-Man
Kellogg	cereals	Disney’s Buzz Lightyear, Mickey Mouse, Winnie the Pooh and the <i>Lion King</i> ’s Pumba, Timon and Simba

Branding Children: Marketing Techniques

In addition to using a variety of different types of media and approaches to reach children as described above, food companies use a variety of techniques to entice children to buy or nag their parents for food products. These techniques range from tie-ins with movies, television characters or athletes to offering toys or premiums with foods to contests.



Children's favorite cartoon characters: food companies plaster them on packages, feature them in ads and shape food into them.

Spokes-characters, Tie-ins and Celebrity Endorsements

Advertising and marketing aimed at children often utilize television and movie characters, star musicians and athletes, taking advantage of children's familiarity with, affection for or admiration of them. Younger children

"Studies have shown that the mere appearance of a character with a product can significantly alter a child's perception of the product," concluded the Children's Advertising Review Unit, the self-regulatory organization of the advertising industry (2002).

may not understand that spokespeople are paid to promote products, and small children may not even understand that cartoon characters do not really exist. Using characters from movies and television shows also blurs the line

between programs and advertising. As noted above, there are numerous examples of tie-ins on food product packages. Coca-Cola's tie-in to the Harry Potter movies involves not only images from the movies on product packages, but also television, radio and print advertising, contests, games, a website, in-store displays and a literacy and reading campaign (Lippman & McKay, 2001). The Hulk, Spider-Man and Captain America are enlisted to sell Original Brand Popsicles in ads in *Nickelodeon* magazine (Nickelodeon, 2003). Singer, actress and model, Beyoncé, stars in a Pepsi advertising campaign.

There are about 10 to 12 marketing tie-ins between children's movies and fast-food or other retail establishments each year (Lippman & McKay, 2001). Baskin Robbins' ice cream flavor of the month is tied to Dreamworks' movie, *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas*. Applebee's Neighborhood Grill and Bar's marketing uses a tie-in to *Jonah: A VeggieTales Movie*.

Fast-food companies feature movies in their television ads, conduct contests and give away movie-based toys as part of children's meal packages, like McDonald's Happy Meals. McDonald's and the Walt Disney Company signed a 10-year exclusive contract in 1996, and promotions have included tie-ins with *Monsters Inc.*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Tarzan* and *Peter Pan in Return to Never Land*. Burger King has

aimed at children are animated and 48% are partially animated.

Enticing Children with Toys, Premiums, Games and Contests

Premiums and other giveaways, games and contests are used to interest children in food for reasons unrelated to the food itself. In many cases, the premium seems to be the primary

enticement for the purchase, though children end up eating the food as well, which is often high in calories and low in nutrients. A television ad for McDonald's Happy Meals tied to the Peter Pan movie sequel, *Return to Never Land*, focused on a boy and girl playing with the toys, rather than on the food.

To keep children coming back, the toys that come with children's meals at fast-food restaurants change periodically. McDonald's had 14 different toy sets for Happy Meals in 2001 and 16 different sets in 2000 (McDonald's, 2002d). The toys are based

on children's movies or television shows (as discussed above) or are popular toys like Bratz dolls, Teenie Beanie Babies, Hot Wheels cars, Hello Kitty, LEGOs and Barbie dolls. To encourage repeat business, there are usually six to eight toys to collect, which are available for only three to four weeks (requiring parents to bring their children to the restaurant about twice a week in order to collect all the toys).

Restaurants use tie-ins to popular movies to sell low-nutrition foods to children.

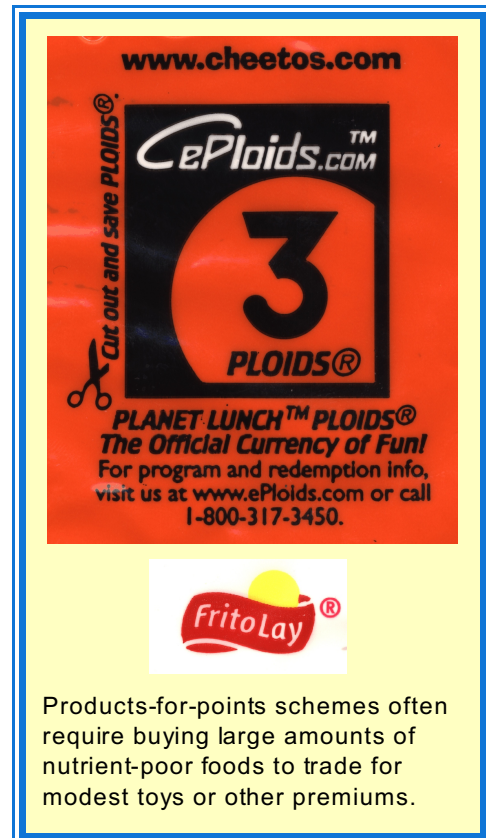
deals with DreamWorks studio and Nickelodeon (Ordonez, 2001). Tie-ins at Burger King have included the movies *Rugrats Go Wild*, *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*, *Shrek* and *Pokemon 2000*, as well as the television programs *Rugrats*, *The Simpsons* and *SpongeBob Squarepants*.

The use of animation in ads also may blur the line between advertising and programming. Kotz and Story (1994) found that 28% of food advertisements

Encouraging children to pester their parents to frequent McDonald's is important to business. Happy Meal sales make up 20% of McDonald's transactions in the U.S. (about \$3.5 billion in annual revenue) (Leung & Vranica, 2003). McDonald's also relies on sales to the accompanying parent. The average transaction involving Happy Meals is 50% greater than orders without Happy Meals (Leung & Vranica, 2003). To build on that success, McDonald's introduced the Mighty Kids Meal, with more food to appeal to older children.

Companies also use toys and other give-aways to sell packaged foods in supermarkets. Premiums have included beauty kits (Brach's Rapunzel fruit snacks), trading cards (Nabisco Ritz crackers), an E.T. Finger Flashlight (Post's Oreo O's cereal), Sesame Street dolls (in Kellogg's Rice Krispies), swim goggles (Kellogg's Eggo waffles) and Mickey Mouse Bobble Head toys (Kellogg's Cocoa Rice Krispies and Keebler cookies).

In other cases, children are required to purchase a product many times in order to obtain the toy or other premium. Under these schemes, children typically collect UPC symbols or other proofs of purchase to trade for the premiums. Frito-Lay has "Ploids" (billed as "The Official Currency of Fun") on its snack packages, which can be redeemed for prizes at ePloids.com. However, since a child gets about one Ploid per one-ounce serving, and the premiums ranged in "cost" from 25 Ploids for sneaker stickers to 600 Ploids for a set of five electronic game pens (Frito-Lay, 2002), it seems more economical and



sensible for parents to go to a retail store and purchase the toys their children want rather than buy the large amounts of nutrient-poor foods required to earn them by collecting Ploids. More recently, Frito-Lay moved to an auction format. A \$25 Blockbuster gift card was auctioned for 2,046 Ploids and a Lava lamp went for 1,440 Ploids (Frito-Lay, 2003). Extra Ploids are available on multi-packs, encouraging children to ask their parents to buy in bulk.

A Tony's pizza ad reads, "As if you need another reason to eat pizza" and "Eat Pizza. Get Points. Log On. Bid or Buy Stuff." The ad features a child stuffing his face with pizza and holding a toy. The Original Brand Popsicle, Kool-Aid, and Mega Warheads candy also have used premiums for points marketing.



Food as Entertainment.

Sometimes the food is designed to be used in play or to be a toy itself. *Ad Age* reported that Kraft's Rip-Ums peel-and-eat cheese line will appeal to children because of the "play value of the product" (Thompson, 2002). Nabisco manufactures fruit snacks called Fun

Fruits Gamesters which are game pieces for playing tic-tac-toe. Hershey's Candy Bar Factory is a chocolate bar with spaces for peanut butter filling, frosting, sprinkles and cookie bits that are included. Once put together, it has about five times the calories and fat of a regular Hershey's bar (440 calories versus 90 calories). Ads for Oscar

Mayer's 260-calorie Fudge Brownie Lunchables instruct children to "Slap on some frosting" and decorate their brownie and then ask, "How fun is that?" (*Girl's Life*, 2001; *Nickelodeon*, 2001). Mystery Jell-O and Kool-Aid Magic Twists drink mix change into surprise colors.

M&M's Minis are available in a Toy and Pogo Dispenser tube. One ad for M&M's Minis was a game in which children slam down the M&M's tube and the child who dispenses the most Minis gets to eat all the candy (*Sports Illustrated for Kids*, 2001). Kid Cuisine's ad in *Nickelodeon* magazine is a game called Race to the Commvee (*Nickelodeon*, 2003) and a Necco candies ad is a find-the-differences game (*Disney Adventures*, 2003). Interaction with a brand while playing a game helps children

to remember the product and brand, as well as cultivate positive attitudes about it.